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Redemptorist Society of Arizona
Desert House of Prayer

Fall 2014
DESERT HOUSE OF PRAYER
Mediating the Divine Feminine

Dear Desert Companions and Friends,

Mary Magdalene has often been considered the biblical paradigm of conversion and transformation. She has become a desert icon mediating the Divine Feminine. She is indeed a companion for any spiritual journey in the desert. With Mary Magdalene in mind Emil Male writes:

Beauty, consuming itself like incense burned before God in solitude far from the eyes of humanity, becomes the most stirring image of penance conceivable....the generosity of expiation, the gift of tears, are to the Christian a perpetual subject of meditation.

Benedicta Ward in her book: ***Harlots of the Desert*** writes: *Mary Magdalene has always been one of the most popular of saints, perhaps because of the extremes of her career from prostitute to hermit, from sin to sanctity, from grief to glory.* She is a person of the street who loved greatly and was loved even more greatly. She has been regarded as an 'apostle to the apostles', the 'friend', and the 'beloved' of Christ. Benedicta Ward goes on to say that the appeal of Mary Magdalene for contemplative practice is that she is wounded, vulnerable, sinful and finds redemption by the free gift of love: *it is not less love but more; and therein is Christian hope.*

Albert Peyriguere, follower of Charles de Foucauld among the Berbers in Morocco, recommends for our spiritual practice that we be conscious of the presence of Christ in us and know love fully at the core of ourselves that we are in the Christ. This identification with Christ like a *wave surging from the deep* will sweep away all our weaknesses and bring forth new possibilities from our imperfections.

Mary Magdalene as a mentor for contemplative practice teaches us that our vulnerabilities, our weaknesses and failings are part of our uncompromising nature. It is this nature that enables us to surrender ourselves completely to Christ. Contemplative practice teaches us to accept our shortcomings without giving them too much thought. We notice them, acknowledge them only to give thanks for the desire and the sure hope of embodying the Christ in all we are and do as imperfect and convoluted as it may seem.

Be simple!

DESERT HOUSE OF PRAYER NEWS:

Bro. Bill Coughley was busy with many summer projects. A new air conditioning/heating unit was installed in St Gerard hermitage which included a new roof. Maria Celeste hermitage received a new water heater. The interior of the chapel got a new coat of fresh paint with the help of Karl Zawatski and friends from Poverello House, a Franciscan sponsored homeless shelter in Tucson. The exterior of the chapel was painted with the help of an amazing octogenarian paint entrepreneur Bill Pennell. We are slowly refurbishing all the guest rooms as we are able and as we receive furniture donations from donors.

Our beloved Fr. Bill Parker, the previous director of DHOP, died on April 22 at St. Clement Health Care Center in Liguori, Missouri. After a courageous battle, he succumbed to cancer that was diagnosed while at DHOP in 2011. Fr. Bill was asked by his Redemptorist superiors to serve as director of DHOP in 2008. Before his arrival at DHOP he said he knew nothing about contemplative prayer. However after the three years he spent in the desert he said it was the most extraordinary experience of his life. Living in silence and practicing centering prayer brought forth a very strong awareness of the presence of God in his life. Before he died, Fr. Bill said that *God loves us and continues to invite us to grow. If we can just let God be a part of our lives and let go of fear, extraordinary things happen. I do not understand it, but I believe, now more than ever, that God's love is way more than I will ever comprehend, even when I feel most alone.*

Pauline Anthony our dedicated volunteer bookkeeper for nine years suddenly passed away in September. Pauline died of complications due to an intestinal infection not directly related to her recovery from cancer. Pauline retired from her volunteer bookkeeping position at DHOP in June. She was looking forward to

traveling and spending more time with her children and grandchildren before her unexpected death. She will be greatly missed by the Desert House Staff and Community. Her selfless, faithful service to DHOP was an inspiration to us all.

We are pleased to welcome Jacqueline Weigand as our new bookkeeper. She had the privilege of learning her new position from Pauline Anthony before Pauline's retirement and unexpected death. Jacquie is a member of Our Lady of the Desert Parish at the Redemptorist Renewal Center. She comes to DHOP with many years of experience as an office manager and executive assistant.

Desert Companion and retreat guest Edward Frantz passed away on February 22, 2014 after a short illness from a misdiagnosed cancer. Ed lived and worked in New York City as a specialist in environmental graphic design. He was a graduate of the Instituto Europeo di Design of Milan, Italy, and Parsons School of Design in New York. One of his last projects was the full block 12 story vertical campus of John Jay College in New York. Ed was a life long student of the arts and theology. Desert House of Prayer was his favorite place for spiritual renewal and retreat.

In August we received the sad news that Bill Rinck passed away peacefully on July 16. Bill had been battling cancer for six years. Desert House of Prayer became an important refuge in Bill's life where he could explore the meaning of living into death and dying into life more fully. Bill enriched all of us who traveled the contemplative journey with him. From Bill's Journals he wrote: *The Mountain, the Water, Mother Earth and I are One.*

In July we also received notice that Lena Sanfilippo, the mother of our volunteer web designer, died at the age of 91. Lena was a woman of deep faith who was known for her exceptional kindness, humility, determination, purity of heart and love of family. She was passionate about music and deeply dedicated to teaching.

Fr. Don Huntimer, C.S.V., a priest of the Congregation of St. Viator died on September 16, 2014 in the hospice unit at Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights, IL. In 1990 Fr. Don moved to Tucson where he served as sacramental minister to area parishes, convents and prisons. He was a frequent retreat guest and personal friend of Fr. John Kane, C.Ss.R, the founder of DHOP. Fr. Don was a gifted artist, painter, photographer, and gardener. Some of his paintings can be seen throughout the DHOP campus.

Fr. Bill Parker, Pauline Anthony, Edward Frantz, Bill Rinck, Fr. Don Huntimer C.S.V. and Lena Sanfilippo modeled lives of integrity, compassion, kindness, creativity and service. They lived each day faithful to the presence of God. Now may they rest in eternal peace.

Migdalia Barrientos our weekend chef is leaving DHOP for full time employment with the United States Postal Service. We will miss her culinary gifts and her welcoming, kind and caring presence. We are deeply grateful for her faithful service to DHOP for the past two years. We wish her many blessings for all of her future endeavors.

Current Needs

We invite you to consider remembering Desert House of Prayer with a gift in your will. More information about how to do so is available by contacting Rev. Thomas Picton, C.Ss.R. at deserthop@live.com. Other gifts can be made to Desert House of Prayer by means of the enclosed envelope or through PayPal on the donations page of our website deserthouseofprayer.org.

Final Thought

The human ego tries to keep us focused on institutional loyalty and political correctness. The contemplative path invites us to focus on inner awakening and consciousness modeled by Christ. Such understanding flows from the Holy Spirit. May we continue to persevere in showing up, sitting in silence and allowing the Holy Spirit to do her work within us. Everything else that really matters will take care of itself in time.

Blessings,

